

**Amendments to the Claims**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

- 1           1.       (currently amended): A system for negotiating multi-path  
2 connections between a plurality of intermediary devices in a networked  
3 computing environment, comprising:  
4           a client-side network protocol stack defined on an intermediary device  
5 available from a plurality of intermediary devices on a primary communications  
6 channel and establishing a client-side connection between a requesting client and  
7 the intermediary device in accordance with a connection-oriented network  
8 protocol;  
9           a server-side network protocol stack establishing a server-side connection  
10 between the intermediary device and ~~[[the]]~~ a requested server on a primary  
11 communications channel in accordance with the connection-oriented network  
12 protocol;  
13           a synchronization module determining differences in connection  
14 parameters defined for the client-side connection and the server-side connection  
15 and communicating the connection parameter differences to at least one other  
16 such intermediary device over an out-of-band communications channel.
- 1           2.       (original): A system according to Claim 1, further comprising:  
2           the synchronization module communicating a service request initially  
3 received from the requesting client to the at least one other such intermediary  
4 device while establishing the client-side connection over the out-of-band  
5 communications channel.
- 1           3.       (original): A system according to Claim 1, further comprising:

2           the synchronization module deferring communicating the connection  
3   parameter differences for transitory connections.

1           4.       (original): A system according to Claim 1, wherein the out-of-band  
2   communications channel comprises at least one of a broadcast, multicast, or  
3   point-to-point channel.

1           5.       (original): A system according to Claim 1, wherein the connection-  
2   oriented network protocol comprises the Transmission Control Protocol (TCP).

1           6.       (original): A system according to Claim 1, wherein the  
2   intermediary device comprises at least one of a firewall and a boundary controller.

1           7.       (currently amended): A method for negotiating multi-path  
2   connections between a plurality of intermediary devices in a networked  
3   computing environment, comprising:  
4       establishing a client-side connection between a requesting client and an  
5   intermediary device available from a plurality of intermediary devices on a  
6   primary communications channel in accordance with a connection-oriented  
7   network protocol;  
8       establishing a server-side connection between the intermediary device and  
9   [[the]] a requested server on a primary communications channel in accordance  
10   with the connection-oriented network protocol;  
11       determining differences in connection parameters defined for the client-  
12   side connection and the server-side connection; and  
13       communicating the connection parameter differences to at least one other  
14   such intermediary device over an out-of-band communications channel.

1           8.       (original): A method according to Claim 7, further comprising:  
2       communicating a service request initially received from the requesting  
3   client to the at least one other such intermediary device while establishing the  
4   client-side connection over the out-of-band communications channel.

1           9.       (original): A method according to Claim 7, further comprising:  
2           deferring communicating the connection parameter differences for  
3           transitory connections.

1           10.     (original): A method according to Claim 7, wherein the out-of-  
2           band communications channel comprises at least one of a broadcast, multicast, or  
3           point-to-point channel.

1           11.     (original): A method according to Claim 7, wherein the  
2           connection-oriented network protocol comprises the Transmission Control  
3           Protocol (TCP).

1           12.     (original): A computer-readable storage medium holding code for  
2           performing the method of Claim 7.

1           13.     (original): A system for communicating routing information  
2           between a plurality of link layer intermediary devices in a networked computing  
3           environment, comprising:  
4           a link layer intermediary device available from a plurality of link layer  
5           intermediary devices receiving a session packet from a requesting client;  
6           an encapsulation module generating an echo request packet identified as  
7           originating from the requesting client and addressed to a requested server and  
8           encapsulating the session packet within the echo request packet;  
9           the link layer intermediary device forwarding the echo request packet to  
10          the requested server;  
11          at least one other such link layer intermediary device receiving an echo  
12          response packet from the requested server;  
13          an unencapsulation module unencapsulating session packet from within  
14          the echo response packet and retrieving routing information from the session  
15          packet; and

16           the least one other such link layer intermediary device forwarding a  
17 response packet to the requesting client.

1           14.     (original): A system according to Claim 13, wherein the echo  
2 request packet is an Internet Control Message Protocol (ICMP) echo request  
3 packet and the echo response packet is an ICMP echo response packet.

1           15.     (original): A system according to Claim 13, wherein the  
2 connection-oriented network protocol comprises the Transmission Control  
3 Protocol (TCP).

1           16.     (original): A system according to Claim 13, wherein the  
2 intermediary device comprises at least one of a firewall and a boundary controller.

1           17.     (original): A method for communicating routing information  
2 between a plurality of link layer intermediary devices in a networked computing  
3 environment, comprising:

4           receiving a session packet from a requesting client on a link layer  
5 intermediary device available from a plurality of link layer intermediary devices;

6           generating an echo request packet identified as originating from the  
7 requesting client and addressed to a requested server and encapsulating the  
8 session packet within the echo request packet;

9           forwarding the echo request packet to the requested server;

10          receiving an echo response packet from the requested server on at least  
11 one other such link layer intermediary device;

12          unencapsulating session packet from within the echo response packet and  
13 retrieving routing information from the session packet; and

14          forwarding a response packet to the requesting client.

15          18.     (original): A method according to Claim 17, wherein the echo  
16 request packet is an Internet Control Message Protocol (ICMP) echo request  
17 packet and the echo response packet is an ICMP echo response packet.

1           19.   (original): A method according to Claim 17, wherein the  
2   connection-oriented network protocol comprises the Transmission Control  
3   Protocol (TCP).

1           20.   (original): A computer-readable storage medium holding code for  
2   performing the method of Claim 17.